

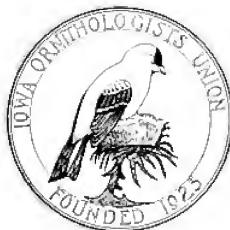
# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE  
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## BIRDS AT MY STUDIO WINDOW

By EARNEST W. STEFFEN

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

(With drawings by the author)

*BROWN THRASHER* — *Toxostoma rufum*

People miss much of the joy and thrill of living by sleeping late in the morning. Some of my most noteworthy and memorable experiences and observations have been made on those all-too-few occasions when I had risen before sunrise and gone abroad to learn what the early morning had to offer. Is there anything more thrilling or more beautiful than to see, against the early flush of a spring morning, a Brown Thrasher in the topmost branches of a tree, and to hear him sing his full-bodied, masterful, exultant melody? Aside from seeing a rare bird this, for exquisite beauty of sight and sound, is to me a high point in bird observation.

Naturally so fine a singer would be welcome at my studio window. One of those which will take up quarters in this part of town soon appears in the area and will enjoy himself at the bird bath. Or he will prowl among the bushes and plants and pitch the leaves in search of larvae. A pair always nests in the bushes in the vicinity of our home and brings their young, if they

have escaped the depredations of children, cats, and dogs, to our lawn for advanced rearing.

We had some interesting experiences with Brown Thrashers at our window tray in the summer of 1945. A mother Brown Thrasher brought her single baby to our lawn, and before long she became interested in the tray in which we had put bread, for the most part, and suet on such rare occasions as we had it. At first the mother sat in a tree and looked at the food with longing, but she did not gain courage for a day or two to perch on the feeder. On the second day we saw her alight on the feeder and quickly take a mouthful of bread, fly to the ground, drop it, pick it up, and either eat it or carry it away to feed her young. As days passed she became much less nervous, and by the end of the week she had given up the prac-



BROWN THRASHER

tice of flying to the ground before eating or carrying the food to her young. She became less alarmed and more accustomed to conditions about the feeding tray, until finally we could open the screen and add feed to the feeder while she sat in a tree not more than 5 feet away watching the procedure.

This extra feed was a boon to mother Brown Thrasher. Now she could get the baby fed up quickly, after which she could do considerable loafing. One day when I was painting yard furniture this Brown Thrasher was around constantly. I suspected that she had the little fellow parked in some of the bushes near by. But she loafed most of the time, sometimes sitting in the small trees preening her feathers, sometimes lolling on one side on the lawn enjoying a sunbath, sometimes just standing. Often she was not 10 feet away. Occasionally she would take an insect from the lawn. I had made a half-hearted effort to find the baby but failed. Finally I heard a note that I knew was the baby's food call. I made another effort to find him, but his call seemed ventriloquial and I didn't see him until after his mother flew over the house to the feeder and returned to feed the little fellow some bread. I wondered at the time how this little Brown Thrasher would fare with so much bread in his diet, but he grew into a fine bird. We finally couldn't distinguish him from his mother except that his plumage showed no wear and was bright and sleek.

There was another adult Brown Thrasher which I took to be the father of the little fellow. He did nothing that I observed toward rearing or feeding his supposed offspring. We saw the two adults together rather often and sometimes both came to the feeder. Later, when the young thrasher was almost full-grown, we saw all three together.

When the baby was finally reared and was able to shift for himself, he and his father disappeared early in August. The mother remained with us. She liked our lawn, our trees and bushes, our pool and our feeder. On August 19 she showed signs of molting. She went through her molt and was a sorry looking sight for several days. Once when I saw her she had lost many feathers from her head and neck and several from her tail. Later I noted that, though her head and neck didn't look much better, new feathers were in evidence. Her tail was entirely new. The feathers obviously had been molted outward, for the middle pair of feathers were the longest, the outer pair the shortest. In less than three weeks this Brown Thrasher grew a new plumage that was bright and trim and well fitted to withstand the rigors



"... BROUGHT HER SINGLE BABY TO THE LAWN . . ."



"... HE GREW INTO A FINE BIRD"

of a trip south. She remained with us until September 17. On that day she sat in the mulberry tree and dozed between visits to the feeder. She ate a great deal and rested much. She seemed to realize that there was a trip to be made very soon. After that day of seeming preparation we saw her no more that year.

The next year a Brown Thrasher returned to us which, because of its familiarity with the feeder and the area, we strongly believe was our same mother thrasher. She did not go through the preliminary routine of getting used to the feeder. She visited the feeder as though well accustomed to do so. She fought for feeder rights with a robin, and brought her fledgling to the feeder and fed him bread in generous mouthfuls as she had done the year before. This time our last observation of this bird was on September 28. That happens to be the latest that I have seen Brown Thrashers in this area.

We like to think that our same Brown Thrasher friend returns every year. Of course we have no very definite proof that such is true; but even this spring (1949) we had visits from a Brown Thrasher which appeared very familiar with the feeder and permitted me to take a color photo of her through my studio window which is not more than 5 feet from the feeder. If this is not the same bird, it has become accustomed to the feeder much more rapidly than our first thrasher. This raised a question of whether or not one could recognize an individual bird from others by the evidence of certain acquired habits.

These Brown Thrashers have been under observation since 1945 when we put up a window tray and began supplying feed to the birds during the entire year. Observations have been fairly constant since we sought to determine whether we really could distinguish one bird from another by means of acquired traits or habits. We have come to feel that in the case of the mother Brown Thrasher under observation the question can be answered with a fair degree of certainty in the affirmative. The seeming familiarity with the feeder even on the thrasher's first appearance each spring, the lack of a preliminary period of becoming accustomed to feeding at the tray as was evidenced by the activities of the first observation in 1945, her lack of fear which seems to point to an accustomed habit of visiting the feeder, and the repeated incident of bringing her offspring to the area for feeding, lead us to that conclusion.

I often question the advisability of attracting birds to the city. Each pair of thrashers that I have observed has added only one progeny each year to the Brown Thrasher population. There are really too many predators in a city for most birds, and it is too much of an up-hill task for them to successfully compete against the great odds. If we really have seen the same mother thrasher each year for the past five years, that, no doubt, would be rather remarkable considering the many hazards that birds encounter during



"A PAIR ALWAYS NESTS IN THE VICINITY OF OUR HOME"

their usually short lifetime. And if a pair of thrashers successfully rears one young bird each year, that probably is a fair average for city-dwelling birds

Our observations of the male Brown Thrasher are not so satisfactory or conclusive. After the spring courtship activities the male is more or less quiet and is not in evidence a great deal. Quite obviously other males than the one which we observed in 1945 have occupied this area. During that year we saw the pair together much of the time, though he took little or no part in feeding the young bird. In subsequent years we have seen no male bird that appeared attached to the family. Perhaps mortality is heavier among males. At any rate it seems apparent that our mother thrasher has had to select new husbands from time to time. This spring (1949) I observed two thrashers fighting for the favor of our mother thrasher. This would indicate that last year's male did not return to claim his old territory and that there was competition for it among other males.

The closing episode of this observation is that we have apparently lost our mother thrasher. In the early spring (1949) she appeared at the feeder. She was comparatively tame and appeared to be accustomed to eating at the window tray. As previously indicated, I secured a kodachrome photo of her at a distance of about 5 feet. But a few later appearances at the feeder proved to be the last that was seen of this mother thrasher. She appeared no more. Calamity must at last have overtaken her

Another pair of thrashers brought off two young and led them to our yard. We observed them for some time, but on no occasion did the adult thrashers visit the window tray to secure food for them

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## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE CONVENTIONS

By F. L. R. ROBERTS  
SPIRIT LAKE, IOWA

Some people at the McGregor convention said to me, "I like this kind of convention—more field trips." Others said, "Yes, but we miss the programs of talks and pictures."

I discussed our conventions with many old-timers and also with some who were attending their first or second meeting, and I feel that improvements are possible. For example, the attendance the first forenoon is often very scanty. When we planned the convention at Spirit Lake some years ago we hated to ask important, capable speakers to address the few that would be there early. So we put on a local speaker who was not particularly well known as an ornithologist. And it turned out to be the best talk of the convention!

Why not reserve the first forenoon for field trips with concurrent registration? Have a leader who is ready to start on time at, say, six o'clock. He should start promptly with those who are ready and not wait around for those who planned to go but were too sleepy to be on time. Many of us have got up early, hurried to be on time and then waited hours because stragglers were not ready. The point is, the trips were all scheduled for the same hour. Have another leader ready to start on time at seven and another at eight-thirty. It would probably be well to have some plans for those who arrive later in the forenoon of this first day.

The noon and afternoon could be given over to business and papers. Business should come first so that committees would have time to meet and report before evening. A popular feature of some of our former meetings was a general discussion by the whole group. These gave many people a chance to have a small part in the activities. In the past we have discussed such sub-

jects as, "Usefulness of Birds of Prey," "Identification of Difficult Species," "Distribution of Eastern and Western Meadowlarks." We didn't adequately record those discussions and so lost some of their value. I believe, also, that each convention should have one paper for beginners. Such subjects as "Methods in Bird Study," "How to Identify Difficult Species," "How Birds are Classified" would be appropriate. If nobody volunteers for such a paper, I think the President should request one from somebody that he knows to be competent.

Our Secretary could well purchase a timer clock such as the General Electric x-ray timer. When a speaker starts, the clock should be started and set where he can see it. It will ring when his appointed time is up. Since all the available time is allotted to various speakers, if any one speaks much overtime he does so on another's time. An impersonal clock would do more to keep speakers within reasonable limits than would a person acting as a monitor, as is sometimes done. Perhaps it would be less embarrassing if the clock was given a more-or-less humorous name such as "The Axe—it shortens many a tale (tail)".

We have usually devoted the morning of the second day to field study. Let's have a leader ready to start at 5 a.m. and have him start at that time with those who are on time. Second, third, and fourth trips could be scheduled for later hours.

At a field trip at one of our conventions in the middle of May, a Slate-colored Junco was reported. Should it be included in a published list? Well, that would depend upon who saw it and under what conditions it was seen.

Most of the best ornithologists in the state participate in our field trips, yet the accuracy of our lists is no greater than is the skill of the least capable person reporting. One of the purposes of the convention should be to compile an authentic list of the birds seen. However, we should not offend or discourage the neophyte nor the occasional birder.

To accomplish our aims I favor extending our constitution to include a Board of Review—this board to include about five members chosen for their knowledge of birds and also of birders. They probably should not be elected but could be appointed by the President. This board should set up a set of rules for screening records and these rules should be read each time before a list is compiled so that all will understand that nothing personal is intended if a record is challenged.

I suggest that the Board of Review should obtain and write down full information regarding the circumstances of each observation if:

1. Less than four people saw the bird, or,
2. The bird is particularly hard to recognize, or,
3. The bird is out of its normal range, or,
4. The bird is out of season.

After obtaining this information, the list should be compiled and counted as has been done at former conventions. It would be best not to comment during the convention as to whether the challenged record was to be included or excluded.

After the meeting the Board should decide whether the challenged record should be accepted for publication and permanent record. Other data of considerable value could be added, such as "The spring has been unusually warm and most of the shorebirds have gone north." Estimates of the number of birds of each species would not be particularly accurate but it would be interesting to know that, "More than a dozen Kentucky Warblers could be seen by one observer in a few hours."

The accuracy of our convention lists, in fact the accuracy of all our field work in the state, could be greatly increased by adding to our printed check-

lists some generic terms. For example, one spring day I saw approximately 1,000 blackbirds. A few of these I identified certainly as Red-wings. It is more accurate to check 1,000 after the generic name "Blackbirds" and 15 after the term "Red-winged Blackbird" than to guess them all to be Red-wings or omit them entirely. There are a number of such terms that could be included and the general membership of the Union, who use the lists, should be asked for suggestions before a new list is printed.

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## THE VIREOS AND WARBLERS IN THE MISSISSIPPI VALLEY

By JAMES HODGES  
DAVENPORT, IOWA

Since the time of Prof. Wells W. Cooke and his studies of the migration of birds in the Mississippi Valley in 1884, very little has been published to bring up to date what is known of the migration of birds in the Mississippi Valley in Iowa. In 1946 the author of this paper completed a manuscript on the avifauna of Scott County, Iowa, which is unpublished as yet. Scott County differs very little from its neighboring counties, such as Jackson, Clinton, Muscatine, Louisa and other counties located on this side of the Mississippi River. With this in mind I have assembled the data I collected in the other counties. These data give a fairly accurate summary of the bird life along the Mississippi River in Iowa as it is today. The section on the vireos and warblers is presented herewith. I hope to some day publish my full paper on the birds of this region, adding to it later data and bringing the entire paper up to date.

The vireos and warblers arrive in the latter part of April with the peak being reached in the second week of May. Some, however, arrive in the middle of April while others are still passing through during the remainder of May. The countless "waves" of warblers put zest into the spring migration. How many of us have gazed with longing eyes through the foliage of a huge maple for a glimpse of a minute bird at the very top of the tree, and we can only list it as a "warbler, unidentified"? It is in warbler observation that our ears must replace our eyes, for every lisp or series of notes may help in the identification.

Following is an annotated list of 40 species—7 vireos and 33 warblers.

White-eyed Vireo. An uncommon migrant and a rather rare summer resident.

Bell's Vireo. A tolerably common migrant and a summer resident, though in most localities I think it is a rather rare nesting bird.

Yellow-throated Vireo. A tolerably common migrant and rare summer resident. During mid-summer they may not be seen but their song is most distinctive.

Blue-headed Vireo. A tolerably common migrant.

Red-eyed Vireo. A common migrant and summer resident. This is the most common vireo in the state, though in some sections the Warbling Vireo may equal it in numbers.

Philadelphia Vireo. An uncommon migrant.

Warbling Vireo. A tolerably common migrant and summer resident.

Black and White Warbler. A common migrant.

Prothonotary Warbler. A tolerably common migrant and summer resident. The summer resident population generally depends upon the available nesting

sites. In the bottom lands along the Mississippi River, where an enormous number of trees have been killed due to the new channel and rise in water level, they can be found in fairly large numbers. They are also common along the Wapsipinicon River where Richard Schaefer and I found them nesting.

Worm-eating Warbler. A rare and irregular migrant. I have found them only during the spring migration, though they may pass through during the fall.

Golden-winged Warbler. An uncommon migrant.

Blue-winged Warbler. An uncommon migrant.

Tennessee Warbler. A common migrant.

Orange-crowned Warbler. A common migrant. Many overlook this bird because it is so inconspicuous. At times it occurs in large numbers.

Nashville Warbler. A common migrant.

Parula Warbler. Tolerably common spring migrant. I have not observed them during the fall.

Yellow Warbler. A common migrant and summer resident.

Magnolia Warbler. A common migrant.

Cape May Warbler. A rare spring migrant. None as yet found in the fall.

Black-throated Blue Warbler. A rather rare migrant.

Myrtle Warbler. A common migrant.

Black-throated Green Warbler. A tolerably common migrant.

Cerulean Warbler. A rare migrant and a very rare summer resident. I found a nesting pair along the Mississippi River in Scott County during 1945.

Blackburnian Warbler. A tolerably common migrant.

Chestnut-sided Warbler. A tolerably common migrant.

Bay-breasted Warbler. An uncommon and irregular migrant.

Black-poll Warbler. A common migrant.

Northern Pine Warbler. A rare and irregular migrant.

Western Palm Warbler. A common migrant.



"GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER, AN UNCOMMON MIGRANT"

This shows a male bird, enlarged from movie film taken by Roscoe W. Franks and Lawrence E. Hicks. Reprinted from the Wilson Bulletin, Dec. 1933.

Oven-bird. A tolerably common migrant and summer resident. It is common as a nesting bird in the area of Wild Cat Den State Park in Muscatine County.

Grinnell's Water-thrush. A common spring migrant. In 1947 I found a pair nesting along Duck Creek in Scott County. This is the first time I have found it nesting in this area, but Philip A. DuMont in his book on the birds of Iowa listed it as a breeding bird in the Mississippi River valley bottoms.

Kentucky Warbler. A rare migrant and a possible summer resident. On June 21, 1948, I saw three birds at a very unfrequented portion of Credit Island in Scott County, and they may have been nesting. A search was made and no nest found. It may be well to emphasize the point that simply because a singing male is found it is no certainty that the bird is nesting. In the case of a rare bird it is a safe practice to find the nest or secure other data that offers direct proof that the bird is nesting.

Connecticut Warbler. An uncommon migrant.

Mourning Warbler. An uncommon migrant.

Northern Yellow-throat. A common migrant and summer resident. In favorable situations it may be abundant.

Yellow-breasted Chat. A rare and irregular migrant.

Wilson's Warbler. An uncommon and irregular migrant.

Canada Warbler. An uncommon migrant.

American Redstart. A common migrant and summer resident. I have found them more common on the wooded islands in the river than inland as they prefer moist situations.

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## IOWA BIRD STUDENTS ON VACATION

### BONAVENTURE ISLAND AND PERCE ROCK

While enjoying a vacation in Canada the last two weeks of July, Mr. MacMartin and I visited the bird sanctuary at Bonaventure Island and Perce Rock, at Perce, Quebec, on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Setting out from the pier in an open fishing boat through two miles of white-caps and high, rolling waves we reached the Bird Sanctuary on Bonaventure Island, the principal Gannet colony in North America.

Here on rocks 20 stories high, over 60,000 birds make their homes, half of them Gannets. This large, nearly white bird, has a wing spread of over 6 feet, and weighs about 8 pounds. Gannets are said to eat their own weight in food daily, mostly of herrings. It is thought the Gannets time their migrations to synchronize with the migrations of the herrings.

As the engine of the fishing boat was shut off, the loud chatter of the Gannets could be heard. Gazing upward at the height of these gaunt stone cliffs we saw the seaweed nests 18 inches apart on miles of narrow ledges. Wing to wing the Gannets appeared as a snowdrift as the birds jointly care for their one egg.

Other birds observed at Perce and the Gaspe Peninsula were the Herring Gulls, the most common gull in Quebec, and one we often see migrating through Iowa. They nest in large numbers on Perce Rock among the Double-crested Cormorants, which also migrate through Iowa. It is said 600 to 800 pairs of Cormorants nest here. Cormorants were often noticed close in shore and easily identified.

The Great Black-backed Gull is the largest of the gulls at Perce. The wing span is about 66 inches, compared with 56 inches of the Herring Gull. They are never found in flocks, and are said to be very destructive, eating

the young of other birds. They eat whatever they can get but do not dive under water.

The Kittiwake, about 16 inches, is the smallest of the three kinds of gulls nesting at Perce, and is easily distinguished from the other gulls by its small size and lighter color, being silvery gray above with black wing tips without white spots. They are said to be entirely marine, as they come to Perce Rock and Bonaventure Island cliffs only to breed.

The Common Tern is not common at Perce. These terns, as we have observed in Iowa, are white with grayish wings and with a black cap. Their beak is crimson with a black tip. Many of these terns were noted at the Lachine Rapids on the St. Lawrence River.

Several members of the Auk family were observed at Bonaventure, including the Razor-billed Auk, the Common Murre, the Black Guillemot, and the Puffin. They are easily recognized because of their Penguin habits. All the Auks fly, but their wings being short for their load, are flapped very fast. They all dive for their food, and use their feet for surface swimming.

A Razor-billed Auk is identified by the depth of his compressed beak, like a barber's razor. The tip of the beak is crossed by a white bar. A few hundred are said to breed on Bonaventure Island. One large egg is laid in a crevice or under a rock. It hatches early in July and by late August and September none of these birds are seen on the island cliffs, a fact which applies to the other members of this family.

The Common Murre has a coat of sooty feathers rather than black. They nest in rock crannies on Bonaventure Island and will permit one to approach their nests unmolested.

The Black Guillemot, or "Sea-pigeon", is the most widely distributed of the auk family around the Gulf of St. Lawrence. These are small black ducks with large white wing patches. They are so small they never could be confused with large sea ducks which are black with white wing patches.

The Atlantic Puffin whose crown and upper parts are black, wears a black necklace over his white breast. His white face looks very solemn with his large compressed beak decorated in red on the outer parts and blue-grey on the base, the colors all outlined by narrow margins of pale yellow. The Puffin is the quaintest looking sea-bird on Bonaventure Island or Perce Rock.

We saw other birds which we could not identify, but we felt we had been well repaid for our long journey to Perce, Quebec.—MRS. W. G. MAC MARTIN, Tama, Iowa.

#### COLORADO

My husband and I, with another couple, had a wonderful vacation in Colorado. We left home on June 25, had two days on the road each way, and had eleven days in Colorado. In Nebraska we saw Arkansas Kingbirds, Orchard Oriole, Yellow-headed Blackbirds and Magpies. Our first House Finch sang for us at Fort Morgan, Colorado, as we were stopped for gas.

We had reservations for several days at the Somerville, in Big Thompson Canyon, near Estes Park. There we saw Violet-green Swallow, Western Tanager, various sparrows, Green-tailed Towhee, Red Crossbill, Black-eared Nuthatch, Red-shafted Flicker. At Bear Lake we saw Red-naped Sapsucker, Gray-headed Junco and the Nutcracker. Mountain Bluebirds were nesting in a crevice of the museum building at Moraine Park.

We took one day for a drive to Grand Lake, and on this trip we saw the Pipit, Desert Horned Lark, Townsend's Solitaire. We heard the Solitaire sing, as well as the Hermit Thrush. After we left Ferncliffe we headed for Central City on the Peak to Peak highway. I have never seen such flowers as we saw that day! We went to Echo Lake from Central City and spent the night in a little town called Kittredge. I got up early and added the Lazuli Bunt-

ing, Western Bluebird and Arkansas Goldfinch to my list. We drove to Red Rocks Park, where we saw the Spotted Towhee and White-throated Swift.

We drove only 2,500 miles and most of our birding was confined to the area round Estes, the Rocky Mountain National Park, and a few stops around Denver. In City Park in Denver we saw a Black-headed Grosbeak. Our complete list for the trip was 67 species. In addition to those mentioned above, we saw these which were of especial interest to us: Plumbeous Vireo, Macgillivray's Warbler, Raven, Water Ouzel, Pileolated Warbler, Rocky Mountain Jay, Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds, Mountain Chickadee, Cassin's Purple Finch, Brewer's Blackbird, Steller's Jay, as well as many western forms of our eastern birds.—MRS. R. S. RUEGNITZ, Dubuque, Iowa.

#### DENVER REGION, ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

Mr. and Mrs. K. B. Harrington, my wife and I left home on July 9 for a week's vacation in the Denver, Colorado, region. Our destination was Indian Hills, a small resort town in the mountains about 30 miles west of Denver.

Near this place we made our headquarters in one of the most unusual summer homes in the mountains. The cabin was made from an old pullman coach designed for the special use of the general manager of the Rock Island railway. An old, retired Cedar Rapids (Iowa) railroad man bought the coach when the Rock Island converted from wood to steel, had it hauled out to Denver, then moved up the mountainside, where it was placed on a high cement wall, with a new roof and a large sun-parlor added. The coach was left practically as it was in its original state, with a long vestibule running the full length, upper berths, chef's kitchen, diner, etc. The sun pours into the sun-parlor and there is a wonderful view of snow-capped mountains. The cabin is now owned by Dr. B. L. Knight of Cedar Rapids.

Side trips were made in all directions from Indian Hills. We visited Evergreen, Idaho Springs, Echo Lake, Central City, Kittredge, Lookout Mountain, Golden, and other places. We enjoyed the beauties of Turkey Creek Canyon, Bear Creek Canyon, Virginia Canyon, Big Thompson Canyon and various others. A trip through Rocky Mountain National Park occupied a full day. We drove up the west slope, through Berthoud Pass, beside Grand Lake, and on to Millner Pass. We proceeded on the Trail Ridge Road, with the highest point about 12,000 feet elevation, where we saw Horned Larks, then down the east slope of the mountains to Estes Park.

We saw many birds, but as this was not my first trip to the West, I added only these to my life list: Long-crested Jay, Solitary Vireo, House Finch, Lazuli Bunting, Clark's Nutcracker and Western Flycatcher. The Lazuli Bunting was seen in the beautiful setting of Red Rocks Theatre, near Morrison, a scene that will not soon be forgotten. The Clark's Nutcrackers at Berthoud Pass also stand out in memory.

A highlight of the trip was a visit to the Colorado Museum of Natural History, in Denver, where the Director, Dr. Alfred Bailey, welcomed us and showed us over the museum, basement to top floor. Dr. Bailey is a former Iowa man. One of the finest habitat groups which he has arranged in the museum is a fall scene on the Iowa River, near Iowa City, with a large group of Passenger Pigeons perched among the autumn foliage. This museum has some of the finest habitat groups in the world, and I believe the Passenger Pigeon group is one of the most beautiful I have ever seen.—FRED J. PIERCE.

#### MINNESOTA

Mrs. Vane, Julie and I enjoyed a two-weeks' vacation in Minnesota in July. We spent our time near Park Rapids, just south of Itasca State Park. One of the highlights of the trip was the Audubon Wildlife Tour through the

park which was led by Ken Morrison, the National Audubon Society's representative. Among the birds seen was the Arctic Three-toed Woodpecker, which Morrison considers to be the rarest bird in the park. (Only two pairs are known to exist in Itasca, which is the bird's southernmost limit.) Other birds observed were Pine Siskins and Pine Warblers. Dr. W. J. Breckenridge's new motion picture of winter on the north shore of Lake Superior was shown at an evening meeting in the park and thoroughly enjoyed by the writer and Dr. Warren Keck. We also enjoyed a visit with Dr. Keck, former president of our Iowa Union, at his summer cottage on Lake Ponton, Pontoria, Minnesota.—ROBERT F. VANE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

#### NEBRASKA, UTAH, YELLOWSTONE, WESTERN STATES

Mr. Johnson and I left Ames on June 16 for a western trip. Near Brady, Nebraska, along the Platte River, we observed Western Kingbird, Connecticut Warbler, Mockingbird, Black-headed Grosbeak and Bell's Vireo. We stayed over night in North Platte and took a hike over the sand hills north of town to look for Prairie Chickens. The poor Upland Plovers were hovering over their drowned-out nests at the edge of town, for there had been too much rain. We found no Prairie Chickens, but Lark Sparrows were everywhere.

We saw the first Magpie near Ogallala and we saw them at intervals the rest of the way to Yellowstone, but only one in Yellowstone. Lark Buntings were numerous in western Nebraska and part of Wyoming. At Rawlins, Wyoming, we saw Lazuli Buntings, Cassin's Purple Finches, and Mountain Bluebird. On the capitol grounds in Salt Lake City we saw a pair of California Quail, which were very tame. We also saw House Finches on the capitol grounds.

On our way to Brigham, Utah, we turned onto a side road and were excited to see a dozen Brewster's Snowy Egrets at a small pond. Brigham is indeed a mecca for water and shore birds, and they were so close, with their nests along the roadsides. The rangers were very helpful, told us where to look for Marbled Godwits, Long-billed Curlews and some of the species which are harder to find.

At Jackson, Wyoming, we saw Violet-green Swallows. At other points we had seen Western Tanagers, Red-shafted Flickers and Bullock's Orioles. A filling station attendant at Jackson told us about a nest of Trumpeter Swans a quarter of a mile up the road. We found the nest and Mr. Johnson tried a black and white picture of it, but all that showed was a white spot!

In the Grand Tetons we hunted up the ranger, who gave us the park bird list and it helped us considerably. Our first night in Yellowstone was at Thumb, where the ranger gave us a good deal of information on birds. We didn't find all those that he told us we might find, but we did see Mountain Chickadee, Bald Eagle, Barrow's Golden-eye, Green-winged Teal, Rocky Mountain Pine Grosbeak, Plumbeous Vireo, Water Ouzel, Clark's Nutcracker, Stellar's Jay, Golden Eagle and Trumpeter Swans were seen several times.

Besides, we saw 17 bears, 10 moose, 7 deer, and many herds of elk. Near Devil's Tower, Wyoming, was a prairie dog town with a population of 100 or more. They were barking and running around with their families of one or two, but we saw no Burrowing Owls. Our complete bird list for the trip was 91 species, with the last one added on June 2, when we were homeward bound near Murdo, South Dakota.—MRS. R. W. JOHNSON, Ames, Iowa.

#### TEXAS AND CHURCHILL, MANITOBA

This past summer, in traveling over 6,000 miles (round trip) within the same time zone, it was my pleasure to add 29 new species of birds to my life list. In June, Esther Copp, Myra Willis and I attended the second session of

the Audubon Nature Camp at Kerrville, Texas. The camp, completing its second year, is held at Schreiner Institute. We found it to be well organized and the instructors among the best in their fields. Most classes were held in the field to which students were taken in station wagons. Classes were held from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with a three-hour interval at noon for lunch, study, and rest. In addition, there was a one to two-hour session of movies or lecture in the evening. Nature Activities was a required course, with a choice of two additional from Birds, Plants, Vertebrates, and Invertebrates. We all took Birds.

The Golden-cheeked Warbler was our most unique bird observation, as its nesting area is limited to the juniper-clad hills of the Edwards Plateau in central Texas. But as to color, the Painted Bunting, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Summer Tanager were unsurpassed. We enjoyed the Scissor-tailed Flycatchers perched on telephone wires along the roadsides and the bird chorus in the ravine back of the dormitory.

Of the 60 species of birds observed in Texas, the following were new to me: Roadrunner, Chuck-will's-widow, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Texas Woodpecker, Texas Jay, Plumbeous Chickadee, Black-crested Titmouse, Canyon Wren, White-eyed Vireo, Sycamore Warbler, Long-tailed Chat, Great-tailed Grackle, Arkansas Goldfinch, Blue Grosbeak, Black-throated Sparrow, and Rock Sparrow.

Lark Sparrows were the most common birds and one seldom looked up without seeing a Turkey or Black Vulture soaring above. Orchard Orioles frequently sang from campus trees, and Mockingbirds were numerous. On one occasion we observed a mother White-eyed Vireo feed a young Cowbird. The songs of Bewick's, Carolina, and Canyon Wrens became familiar. On one bird trip we found the nest of Bell's Vireo with four young and on another we enjoyed watching the families of Canyon Wrens and Rock Sparrows.

A visit to one of the greatest bat caves in the United States proved to be a most interesting experience. Ney Cave, about 40 miles from Kerrville is the home of an estimated 20 to 30 million Mexican free-tailed bats. When we arrived at the cave, about 6:15 p.m., the preliminary evening flight from the cave had begun. As far as one could see there was a long column of bats going in one general direction. Duck Hawks and other hawks took advantage of this departure. They would dive into the long, flying column of bats and usually emerge with a bat in their claws, thus securing an evening meal without too much effort.

We entered the cave after the preliminary flight had abated to see every inch of the ceiling and wall space covered with bats—adult and young, with hundreds more flying above us. Somewhat later the main flight began and continued with scarcely diminished intensity as long as we stayed. We were informed that five to six hours are required for the outgoing flight. During a stop on the way to the cave we saw two types of fossil dinosaur tracks in limestone formation along a stream.

Traveling in the opposite direction in August, I was a member of a tour sponsored by the Canadian National Railway, from Winnipeg to Churchill, Manitoba, the northern terminal. A six-day trip, it is held annually. For its 2,300 miles, the special train is one's "home on wheels," as sleeping quarters and meals are provided thereon. At the six main stopover points local people provide transportation by auto, bus, taxi, boat, or plane to places of interest.

The first stop was Dauphin, where my sister and a couple from Evanston who are bird enthusiasts were fortunate in getting for our driver a local minister who is also interested in birds. As he was driving us to a waterbird area, we saw along a country road on telephone wires, fences, and on the ground in the road an estimated 5,000 Bank Swallows which we watched for a long time. In most places they were perched so close together that no wire

could be seen between them. Continuing we came upon two smaller flocks of the same species increasing the number to 8,000 individuals. At the large pond we saw 16 kinds of ducks and shorebirds that had evidently nested there. All species are seen in Iowa during migration.

Birding was somewhat limited because of the nature of the trip, but I observed about 75 species in Canada most of which were Iowa's migrants in their summer homes. Viewed from the train, I was able to identify only three hawks—Ferruginous Rough-leg, Red-tailed, and Marsh although one kind of Falcon was fairly common. In the tundra region, several flocks of Ptarmigan flew away as the motion of the train frightened them.

A 28-hour stop at Churchill enabled me to add several new birds to my life list, namely—Hudson Bay Eider Duck, Old-squaw Duck, Northern Phalarope, Jaeger, Arctic Tern, Hoyt's Horned Lark and Hudsonian Curlew.

Bonaparte's Gulls were very common. Among the shore-birds, Dowitchers, Yellow-legs, Stilt Sandpipers, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers, Ruddy Turnstones and Semipalmated Plovers allowed one to approach within a few feet as they busily searched for food on the shores of ponds and Hudson Bay. Numerous American Pipits, Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Redpolls flew ahead of one in walking along the railroad tracks and in the grassy and rocky areas adjoining. Two Northern Phalaropes rode the waves of Hudson Bay and if too high, they would fly over the wave.

After hearing Dr. George M. Sutton's interesting account at the Sioux City convention of his finding the eggs of the Harris's Sparrow, a visit to Churchill would not be entirely satisfactory if none of these birds were seen. I was not disappointed as I saw adults and young.

Immature and fall plumages made accurate identification impossible in some cases. I hope to return to Churchill some time in June when birds are in their spring plumage and perhaps also get a glimpse of the Snowy Owls that were reportedly perched along Hudson Bay's rocky shores.

For sportsmen, White Whale hunting is one of Churchill's most unusual attractions although it is curtailed by the Canadian government at present. These whales, members of the Dolphin family, may attain a length of 16 feet although those we saw were smaller. The adults have white smooth skins; their young are brownish gray. Fishermen go out in canoes powered by outboard motors and use harpoons and rifles to capture the whales. These are then sold to the new whaling plant at Churchill for one dollar per foot of whale to be processed. The fat is used in making oleomargarine and oil; the flesh is fed to dogs and minks.

Huskies seemed to be everywhere as each family had a group of dogs staked near its dwelling. One cannot leave this interesting spot without mentioning the town's largest structure, the modern grain elevator with a capacity of 2,500,000 bushels. Much wheat is shipped from Churchill by boat.

It was interesting to note the apparent change in the position of the North Star and other constellations in the two widely separated places that I visited this summer. In Texas the North Star appeared lower in the sky whereas in Churchill, it was more directly overhead. The length of the days—differences in sunrise and sunset were noticeable and the beautiful Northern Lights, which were visible every night, made me realize I was North of 54.—LILLIAN SER-BOUSEK, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

#### WESTERN UNITED STATES

Mrs. Steffen and I, accompanied by my 84-year-old mother-in-law, enjoyed a five weeks' camping trip during the latter part of July and the first part of August this year. We covered some of the same territory that we did last year but drove only about 6,000 miles. We visited ten states, four national parks, two national memorials, a few state parks, and several national forests.

We ended with a short sojourn on the north shore of Lake Superior, where our vacations usually end.

The birding was good and I was able to add a number of new species of birds to my list of observations. Among these are: Rufus Hummingbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Harris's Woodpecker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Sierra Creeper, Western Winter Wren, Calaveras Warbler, Pileolated Warbler, Black-capped Rosy Finch, Nevada Spotted Towhee, California Brown Towhee, and Willow Goldfinch.

Noteworthy observations were the number of Sage Grouse and Sage Thrashers we saw in the sage-brush country. We even got a kodachrome picture, without the aid of telephoto lens, of a Sage Grouse. We saw Water Ouzel at Lassen National Park and hundreds of Cassin's Purple Finches. At Yellowstone National Park we witnessed interesting maneuvers of Ravens. A large flock flew high in the air, soaring and going through other antics and making considerable noise. At Yellowstone also we saw Pine Grosbeaks. It was on the way to Devil's Tower that we got the photograph of the Sage Grouse. On the Wyoming plains we saw innumerable Lark Buntings and McCown's Longspurs. In South Dakota, as I stepped from the car to snap a Dakota sunrise, Prairie Chickens flew up from the side of the highway.

On North Shore we saw hundreds of Purple Finches and wave after wave of warblers moving southward. The warblers consisted mainly of Myrtle, Nashville, Tennessee, Black and White, Black-poll, and Blackburnian, but there were many I could not identify in their fall plumage.

We went west through Rocky Mountain National Park, across the salt flats west of Salt Lake City, and across the desert of northern Nevada where each side of the highway is littered with discarded tires, beer cans and whiskey bottles. (It seems to take a heap of liquor to get across that country.) We then went to Lassen Volcanic National Park and thence to the Pacific coast where we enjoyed several days' stay among the redwoods in California's incomparable state parks. On our return we visited Crater Lake National Park with its deep blue lake, Craters of the Moon National Monument where desolation is so widespread that it is appalling, Yellowstone National Park and its steaming cauldrons, Devil's Tower National Monument, the Black Hills, and at last North Shore where the cool breezes blow and the waves of the "shining big sea water" lap or slap the shore according to their mood.—EARNEST W. STEFFEN, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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## THE FALL MEETING AT WINTHROP

On Sunday, September 18, the third fall meeting of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union and their friends was held at the Fred J. Pierce home in Winthrop. This meeting, following the general pattern of the two previous fall meetings, was entirely informal but was a little different in that it was an all-day affair and the members came as early as they cared to.

The first arrival was at 9 a.m. It was not long before others were coming steadily, and a good crowd had assembled by noon. Others did not come until late afternoon. A brief rain the night before had cleared the skies and it was a beautiful fall day, just cool enough for the two bird trips, which were taken along Buffalo Creek, morning and afternoon.

Card tables and folding chairs were provided and the basket luncheon at noon was eaten on the Pierce lawn. Between 60 and 70 persons were present for the noon lunch. An evening luncheon, with ice cream and cake, was eaten on the lawn at about 5:30.

Postal card invitations (250 in number) had been sent to the entire membership in Iowa, and a few to members in neighboring areas. It was found that many had driven a considerable distance to attend, which was gratifying to the Pierces. It was a day of visiting, of renewing friendships and making new ones.

The evening program was held in the Methodist church auditorium. A short business meeting was held, at which President Johnson presided. Dr. Charles Stewart outlined his plans for a new check-list of Iowa birds. These were approved by the members. Fred T. Hall, director of the Davenport Public Museum, asked for suggestions on the next spring convention of the Union, which is to be held at Davenport.

Colored moving pictures in sound were then shown by M. L. Jones. These were furnished by the Iowa Conservation Commission. The first film showed wild flowers in the Ledges State Park, and the next was of the spectacular spring flight of Blue and Snow Geese through the Missouri River valley in western Iowa. These pictures, in beautiful natural colors, were filmed by Jim Sherman, the Conservation Commission's staff photographer.

H. D. Niehaus, of Waukon, introduced Ellison Orr, the well-known 92-year-old archaeologist and naturalist of the same city. Mr. Orr gave an interesting talk on the Indian mounds of the McGregor area, after which the colored movies which Mr. Niehaus had taken of Mr. Orr telling our members about the Indian mounds at the McGregor convention last May, were shown.

The evening session at the Methodist Church was finished at about 9:30. Most of those attending started for their respective homes at that time, though some of them returned to the Pierce home for a little longer visit.—F. J. P.

**Attendance Register.**—AMES, Mr. and Mrs. R. W. Johnson, Edward L. Kozicky; BOONE, Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Jones, Barbara, Charles and Loren Jones; CEDAR FALLS, Mrs. Jennie Baxter, Verna Davis, Mrs. Lola Deal, Mr. and Mrs. Ray Dix, Myrtle Gaffin, Mary Goodyear, Dr. and Mrs. Martin Grant, Lois Grant, Emma Opfer, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Rugg, Mrs. Eugene Smith, Mrs. F. M. Stevens, Mr. and Mrs. Warren Tay; CEDAR RAPIDS, Lavina Dragoo, Dr. and Mrs. Alfred W. Meyer, Lillian Serbousek, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Steffen, Dr. and Mrs. Robert Vane, Myra G. Willis; DAVENPORT, Mr. and Mrs. Harry Carl, Mr. and Mrs. Fred T. Hall, Bobby and Susie Hall, Richard Schaefer; DUBUQUE, Henry Herrmann, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Heuser, Evelyn Kepper, David Reed, Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Ruegnitz, Ival Schuster, Mary Young; FARLEY, Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Crossley, J. E. Crossley; GRINNELL, Billy Doyle, Waldo Johnson, E. A. Kurth, Conard Schallou, David Thomas; INDEPENDENCE, Ruth Funk, Jay I. Partridge; INDIANOLA, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Leaverton; MT. VERNON, David Ennis, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Ennis; NEW ALBIN, Dr. Chas. Stewart; NEWTON, Frank Bennett, Frank Meng, Mr. and Mrs. John Paul Moore, Joan Vance; OSKALOOSA, Wayne F. Partridge; VINTON, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Pierce; WATERLOO, Myrtle M. Burk, Helen Hawkins, Pearl Rader, Katherine Young; WAUKON, H. Dayton Niehaus, Ellison Orr; WINTHROP, Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Pierce, Florence Pierce, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Pierce. Total registered, 85.

#### GENERAL NOTES

**Water-thrushes in Iowa in Midsummer.**—On July 17, 1949, I observed three Water-thrushes on the edge of Walnut Creek, about 200 yards above its mouth. Two were evidently young as they continually importuned the third to feed them, which it did from time to time. The eye line on all three appeared white, with the underparts quite yellowish. The throats appeared to be spotted, which would indicate the Northern species if the observations were correct. A Myrtle Warbler was also observed in Waterworks Park, Des Moines, on June 5, 1949.—WOODWARD H. BROWN, Des Moines, Iowa.

**Prairie Marsh Wren Nests at Swan Lake, Johnson County.**—Perhaps some of the readers of "Iowa Bird Life" can help in answering the question, "What happens to the Prairie Marsh Wrens between May and July?"

Our situation at Swan Lake, Johnson County, Iowa, is as follows: A great many Prairie Marsh Wrens are seen in migration from April 25, according to my records, until the middle of May. From the middle of May until the middle of July, although numerous trips were made to the lake and in the same areas, they seemed to be non-existent.

Then, as soon as the burr reed has grown up, the wrens reappear and on July 28, 1948, the Marsh Wrens were flushed from the reeds singing their flight song. Nests containing eggs were found on this date as well as several dummy nests.

This year a similar pattern existed. Wrens were seen in migration but none was seen in June or early July. I did not visit the area again until August, but on Aug. 21 six nests were discovered, one with eggs and young.

Could these birds fly farther north for a first nesting period and then, on a leisurely southward flight, stop to nest again? Are we somehow missing them in our observations during those two months, or, what could be the answer? The writer is not the only one to have wondered about this. Fred Kent of Iowa City has posed the same question.—ROBERT F. VANE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

**On the Status of Certain Iowa Birds.**—Mention was made in the June issue of "Iowa Bird Life" of Jack Musgrove's check list of Iowa birds printed recently as a supplement to the April, 1949, issue of the "Iowa Conservationist." Comment was made on the confusing inclusion of subspecies, sometimes under seemingly specific names. One outstanding example of this is the Veery, with only one subspecies listed, (*Ilyotriccus fuscescens salicicola* Ridgway), and this given the name Willow Thrush.

It is the opinion of several bird watchers in the Davenport area that Mr. Musgrove's list looks too much toward the western part of the state in its designations of Iowa status. The following comments are offered, by way of example, not in adverse criticism of the list, for it is certainly a welcome and handy tool, but as basis for reconsideration of the status of some birds for any subsequent publication of the list. The comments are offered in "Iowa Bird Life" rather than sent to Mr. Musgrove with the thought that readers from other areas might be inclined to raise questions concerning the status of other birds in their regions.

1) Eagles. Both Northern and Southern Bald Eagles are given the same status as the Golden Eagle—uncommon migrants. Yet the number of Bald Eagles wintering in the Mississippi valley part of Iowa is doubtless greater in any given year than the number of Golden Eagles reported in the state for all time.

2) The Eastern Hermit Thrush is given as an uncommon migrant; in this area it seems as common or more common than the Olive-backed and Gray-cheeked Thrushes, which are both given the common migrant status.

3) Song Sparrow. Only one subspecies listed, the Mississippi (*M. melodia euphonia* Bangs), and that as a common migrant, nothing being said of the song sparrow as a common breeding bird.

4) Likewise the Tree Swallow, Yellow-throated Vireo, and Red-eyed Vireo are all listed as common migrants with no mention of breeding status, though all breed here to some extent.—THOMAS J. FEENEY, Davenport, Iowa.

**Some recent Changes in Bird Ranges in the State of Iowa.**—In my article under this title in the June issue, the below paragraph was left out by the printer.

SWAINSON'S HAWK (*Buteo swainsoni*). Anderson stated that this bird was well distributed throughout the state as a migrant and was a breeder in the northern and central parts of the state. DuMont substantiated this statement. The check-list of birds of Nebraska, by Haecker, Moser and Swenk, gives this bird as a breeder only in the central and western parts of Nebraska, in the eastern part only during migration. Concensus of opinion of members was that Swainson's Hawk has left Iowa as a breeder but is occasionally seen in migration. The bird has evidently moved its range westward.—CHARLES A. STEWART, New Albin, Iowa.

#### NECROLOGY

A familiar figure at the conventions of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union for many years was J. Wilbur Dole, of Fairfield. He seldom missed a convention if he could possibly attend, and he could be depended upon to give wise and friendly counsel in all matters that concerned the business affairs of our organization.

Mr. Dole departed this life at the University Hospital at Iowa City, on July 19, 1949, following a long illness. He was buried in Evergreen Cemetery, Fairfield.

J. Wilbur Dole was born on a farm in Jefferson County, Iowa, February 7, 1869, a son of Joe R. and Mary E. Dole. He attended Parsons College in

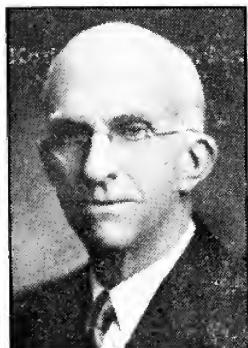
Fairfield and graduated with the class of 1894. Later he taught school, studied law, and was director of the Fairfield Engine Company. He was known as a leader of the Democratic party in the Fairfield community, where he spent his entire life. He served as State Representative from Jefferson County during the 45th General Assembly of Iowa in 1933 and 1934, and was candidate for the same office in November, 1948 but was defeated.

He achieved considerable fame by writing the resolution which, when acted upon by the legislature, made the Goldfinch the State Bird of Iowa. His skillful handling of the resolution, getting it through to final legislation, represented a personal ambition which saw its full fruition.

Mr. Dole enjoyed a long and useful life in his community and served the public in many capacities. He was secretary of the Fairfield Board of Education from 1915 to 1921. He also served on the park board, on the Evergreen Cemetery board, and on the library board of which he was secretary for 20 years. He was deputy clerk of the district court in 1915 and 1916, and was Fairfield's postmaster for the next five years.

As a lodge man he was also prominent; having been a past noble grand and grand conductor of the I.O.O.F. grand lodge of Iowa, as well as a Mason. He held continuous membership in the Iowa Ornithologists' Union for 20 years, joining in 1929. He was a faithful member of the Presbyterian Church. He never married.

Mr. Dole was a thorough nature lover, and became an authority on botany and ornithology. He frequently appeared on the programs of the annual conventions of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, and was a moving spirit behind the two conventions that we have held in Fairfield—two of the finest meetings in the history of our organization. The Union owes Mr. Dole a debt of gratitude which can never be paid. We shall miss him much.—F. J. P.



J. WILBUR DOLE

**LOCAL BIRD CLUBS IN IOWA**

**CEDAR RAPIDS.**—The Cedar Rapids Bird Club finished a successful year with the annual club picnic June 6, 1949, at the river pavilion of Ellis Park. Officers elected for the 1949-1950 club year are: Dr. Robert Vane, president; Miss Marjorie Brunner, vice-president; Miss Dorothy Brunner, secretary-treasurer. The club's roster includes 58 members who meet on the first Monday of every month during the school year at Science Hall of Coe College.

Programs last year were given by members of the Bird Club from their own study and experience. On Oct. 4, Earnest Steffen showed slides and his own western bird paintings and talked on "Birding in the West." Dr. Alfred W. Meyer, who is the Coe faculty sponsor of the club, talked on "The Upper Mississippi Area," illustrating his talk with colored slides.

"Trails in Canada and the New England States" was the title of another talk which included Kodachrome slides. This was given by Miss Lillian Serbousek, Miss Myra Willis and Dick Turner, who had toured Canada and the Gaspe Peninsula the previous summer.

Book reviews were given by Duane Nesetril, Miss Leona Wyckhoff, Miss Isabel Hoyman and Miss Helen Schloeman at another Bird Club meeting.

A guest speaker and former president of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Dr. Warren N. Keck, of North Central College, Naperville, Ill., highlighted the annual Bird Club dinner. He spoke on the varied aspects of "Birding in a Metropolitan Area," illustrating his talk with slides.

At a combined meeting of the Natural Science Club and the Bird Club, Miss Iola Tillapaugh gave an illustrated talk on "Yellowstone National Park." Dr. Robert Vane showed his colored motion picture, "Swan Lake Field Trips," and Miss Lavina Dragoo spoke on "Warbler Migration in Iowa" at other meetings.

In addition to the programs and monthly field trips, the club co-sponsored a second successful year of the Audubon Screen Tours. Speakers last year included Howard Orians, Allan Cruickshank, Howard Cleaves, Bert Harwell and Alexander Sprunt, Jr. The Screen Tours will be continued this coming year of 1949-'50.—ROBERT VANE.

**RECENT BIRD BOOKS**

**BIRDS' NESTS: A FIELD GUIDE**, by Richard Headstrom (Ives Washburn, Inc., New York, 1949; cloth, 12mo, pp. 1-128, 61 photographs; price, \$2.75).

In this little book the author has tackled the difficult job of describing the nests of the birds of eastern United States. It is a very complete, carefully prepared compilation. If the bird student will study it thoroughly and make use of all the clues to identification of nests which are given, he will be certain to get much benefit from it.

The book is divided into two main sections—"Nests on or in the Ground" and "Nests Above the Ground." The first section is sub-divided in these six classifications: Nests in fields or pastures; in woods; in marshes; on or near seashore and lake beaches; in burrows in the ground; on rocks or rocky ledges. In the second section there are nine sub-divisions: Hanging or semi-hanging nests; covered on outside with lichens and saddled on branch; felted nests of cottony materials; containing a layer of mud; made chiefly of bark, fibers, twigs and rootlets; made chiefly of grasses, rootlets, leaves and straw; containing twigs or sticks; in holes in trees or stumps, in birdhouses or similar places; in or on buildings.

Under each of these sub-divisions are described the nests of various birds, some 300 species. There are many distinctive types of nests mentioned, such

as open nests, arched nests, colony nests, and these are broken down into detailed descriptions.

It is a sincere attempt to help the bird student identify the nests he finds. The accompanying 61 photographs of nests add a great deal to the book.—F. J. P.

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**BIRDS: A GUIDE TO THE MOST FAMILIAR BIRDS**, by Herbert S. Zim and Ira N. Gabrielson, illustrated by James G. Irving (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1949; cloth, 24 mo. pp. 7-157, with 100 color plates; price, \$1.00).

A beginner in bird study will find this pocket bird guide of much value. It pictures in full color 112 of the most familiar American birds—the male bird, and sometimes the female and young. Using these birds as key birds, the book mentions additional related and similar species helping to identify about 250 birds.

The text under each plate emphasizes field markings, differences between male and female, related birds, and special facts of importance. Included are also small colored range maps showing summer, winter, or permanent residence of each species pictured.

To make the book more complete are tables showing arrival and departure dates, egg size, nesting data, and food preference as well as "profiles" or silhouettes of typical birds of the major groups.

The first part of this guide serves as a practical advisor on seeing and identifying birds in the field, the necessary equipment required, and suggesting several amateur activities such as attracting birds, bird photography, bird banding, bird counts, and life histories.—LILLIAN SERBOUSEK.

#### MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Miss Grace Leigh, one of our members from Independence, was very seriously injured in an auto accident while on a vacation trip in the West. An auto in which she was riding struck a road grader near McMinnville, Oregon. Miss Leigh suffered a fractured hip and ankle and other injuries followed by cerebral hemorrhage. She has been in a hospital in this Oregon city since late in July and has been making steady, but very slow, progress on the road to recovery.

John Goodman, who had been teaching at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia, returned with his wife for the fall term at the University at Ann Arbor, Mich. Mr. and Mrs. Goodman were instrumental in helping to form a new chapter of the "Middle Georgia Ornithological Society" at Macon. In late August John led a group of bird students through the Ocmulgee National Monument area, with a list of 35 species.

Ellison Orr, a 92-year-old member of our Union who is well known to most of us as an ornithologist and archaeologist, was given the honorary degree of doctor of science by Cornell College on August 16, 1949. The conferring of the degree was a feature of an informal commencement ceremony at Mt. Vernon. We congratulate Mr. Orr on this recognition by a leading state educational institution. Mr. Orr lives at Waukon, Iowa. He explained the history of some of the Indian mounds in the McGregor area on one of the field trips at our May convention. Dr. Charles R. Keyes, of Cornell College, has been associated with Mr. Orr in archaeological work for many years.

The organization meeting of the Kansas Ornithological Society was held at Lawrence, Kansas, on May 21-22, with 66 present. Dr. Ivan L. Boyd, former Iowan, was elected president. He writes that the organization now has a paid membership of 130 and they have some fine plans for the future. Iowa lost a good bird man when Dr. Boyd went to Kansas. We know the new Kansas society will succeed under his management.